

**Following is the full text of Vice President's address –**

“It has been more than a year now since the world and India have been engaged in a continuous battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite many constraints, India successfully controlled this pandemic during the last year through a well calibrated strategy.

We have to continue the battle with the same agility and momentum as we did earlier.

The proven and reliable strategy of increased testing, comprehensive tracking, effective treatment and enforcement of Covid -appropriate behavior needs to be implemented with renewed vigor to counter this virus.

It is indeed a matter of concern that there is a high growth of new COVID-19 cases in the country within a short period of time, especially in 10 states that account for 85% of national cases & 89% deaths reported in the last 14 days. Around 120 districts are reporting high surge in cases since last one month.

With such rising numbers, the healthcare infrastructure will inevitably come under tremendous pressure.

The challenge is formidable but we are better prepared today than we were last year.

We have ramped up infrastructure over the course of past one year.

We now have vaccines which are safe and effective.

We are more confident because of our successful implementation of ‘Test track and treat’ strategy in the past.

We know that we can control the spread of the virus with the support of the community. Encouraging and enforcing COVID appropriate behaviour had helped us curb earlier surges. We must constantly and consistently focus public attention to this vital aspect.

As the constitutional head of state, every Hon’ble Governor has an important role in our fight against this pandemic. It is necessary for Hon’ble Governors to collaborate actively with their respective Hon’ble Chief Ministers and act as consensus builders - going beyond party lines.

As earlier suggested by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, an all-party meeting will help in brainstorming new ideas, sharing of knowledge and exchange of best practices and effective understanding of field concerns and various perspectives. This will help us accelerate the overall COVID-19 management efforts.

Keeping political differences aside, we have to act unitedly as a team.

One of the most useful lessons we have learnt during the last year is that we have succeeded in our fight against Covid 19 mainly because of collaborative work. Every person, every stakeholder, every institution has shown remarkable grit.

We need to continue in the same spirit of working together.

The Hon'ble Governors can act as potential agents of change and supplement the Hon'ble Chief Minister by encouraging more partners to contribute to this fight. Educational institutions, civil society organizations, philanthropists and corporate houses have become active partners during the last one year. We must continue to associate them during this second wave as well.

You can not only share your experience and expertise but also provide guidance to the state governments on crafting a more effective strategy.

We are passing through an unprecedented health crisis. It is having a profound impact on the lives and livelihoods of people. The government led by the Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi has been periodically reviewing the ground realities and have been putting in place a number of social safety measures. We must ensure that the benefits of these initiatives reach those who are in need of them.

The crucial importance of adopting Covid-appropriate behaviour needs to be widely communicated. The message must be internalized and universally adopted by all our citizens. You, Hon'ble Governors, can greatly expand the public outreach and influence public behaviour.

The strategy decided by the Union government in close collaboration with the state governments has been quite clearly laid out by the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

You, Hon'ble Governors, should work with the state governments, facilitating them, guiding them and making this a people's movement or Jan Andolan.

I compliment Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi and his dedicated Council of Ministers for leading India's fight against the pandemic. I salute all the front-line medical professionals, our pharmaceutical industry leaders and all other stakeholders and partners who have been lending invaluable support.

I am sure, you, Hon'ble Governors, will provide the high level of facilitative leadership in your respective states that will help India emerge successful in this battle. I wish you all the very best.

Jai Hind!"